

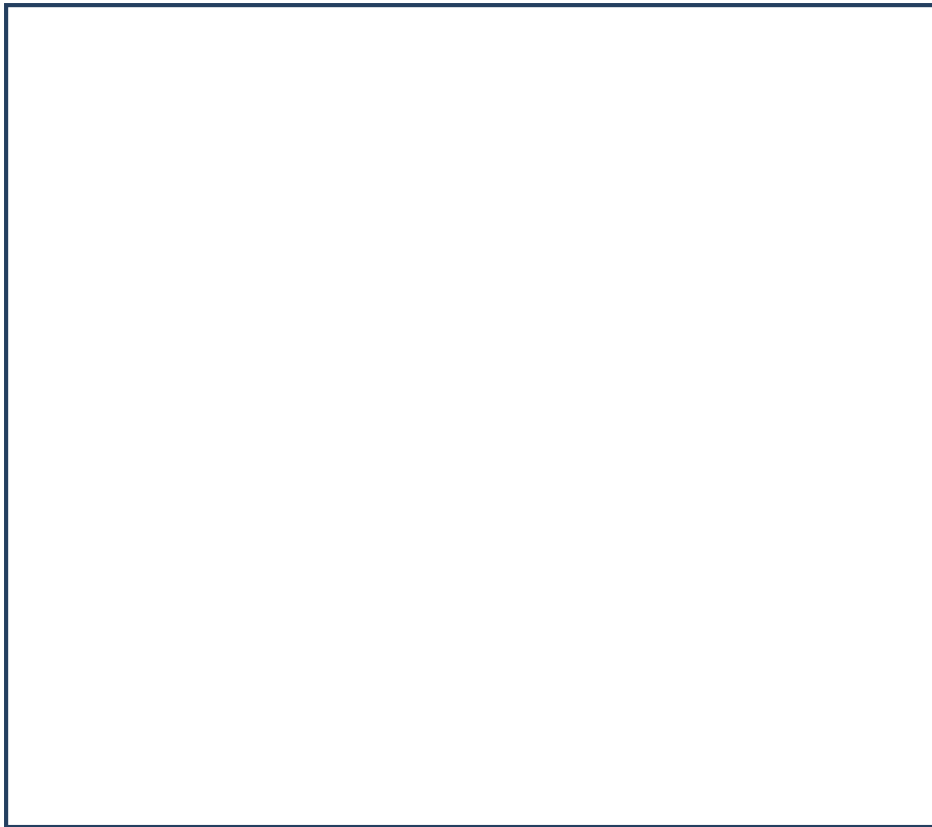


United States Department of Agriculture

Title of Project

Environmental Assessment

INSERT GRAPHIC HERE INLINE WITH TEXT (remove box)



Comment [CW-1]: The purpose of this template is to: 1) organize, not dictate content; 2) create agency-wide consistency; 3) focus analysis on what is truly relevant to significance and the decision being made. The template provides a starting point and suggested format and guidance to keep an EA document focused on the essential elements required by NEPA. Instructions identify required elements and present options for when to consider adding additional sections or content. Blue font is used within the body of the template document when project-specific information needs to be added or content is optional. Instructions are in comments. More information on how to use this template or how to prepare a focused EA is at the end of the document.

Comment [CW-2]: A title page is NOT REQUIRED. Consider the length of your document when deciding whether to have a title page. If you have a title page, consider adding a vicinity map or a useful graphic if it has more utility than a photo of the project area.



Forest Service

Name of Forest Service Unit

Month Year

For More Information Contact:

Responsible Official Name
District or Forest Name
Address
Address
Phone: number
Email: email address
Fax: number

Comment [CW-3]: [Contact information is NOT REQUIRED.](#)

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- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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Name of Project

Name of Forest Service Unit

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Comment [CW-4]: The table of contents section is NOT REQUIRED. Consider the length of your document and public readability when determining whether to include a table of contents. This table of contents is linked to the sections in the document. To update the table of contents and lists of tables and figures, place your cursor on each list and press F9. Choose "update entire table" for best results.

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Name of Project

Name of Forest Service Unit

Introduction

We are proposing to [summarize proposed activities] on [X] acres. These actions are proposed to be implemented on the [Name] Ranger District of the [Name] National Forest.

We prepared this environmental assessment (EA) to determine whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact.

Proposed Project Location

The project area is located [consider including watershed(s), elevation land ownership and ongoing uses, project size, geographical context, vegetation types, etc.].

Insert vicinity map here (figure captions go below graphics)

Figure 1. Vicinity map (Caption Figure style)

Need for the Proposal

This proposal is needed because [describe]. Below is a description of the proposed action [and alternatives, as applicable].

Proposed Action and Alternatives

Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing to...

Alternatives [X]

Alternative [X] was developed in response to issue [X]. It differs from the proposed action by...

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

The following alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study.

Environmental Impacts

Issues

This section includes the issues that have been identified for detailed analysis because the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives may be related to potential significance or the ability to meet the need of the project. The following issues were identified and analyzed to determine the potential for significance:

Comment [CW-5]: The introduction section is NOT REQUIRED. However, a well-crafted introduction can create context and help tell the story. If no introduction is provided, include the proposed project location information such as the ranger district and forest, in the Proposed Action and Alternatives section. Below is example introductory language. The vicinity (and other maps) can be inserted on the title page, within the body of the document (as shown below), or in an appendix.

Comment [CW-6]: The need for the proposal is REQUIRED. Briefly describe the need for action. Think of the need statement as identifying the problem that is to be solved. The need for action discusses the relationship between the desired condition and the existing condition in order to answer the questions: Why consider taking any action? Why here? Why now? Some sources of a need for action may include the forest plan, monitoring reports, other plans or assessments, site visits, or partnerships.

Comment [CW-7]: The Proposed Action and Alternatives section is REQUIRED. Alternatives are required only when there are unresolved conflicts related to the proposed action. A stand-alone no action alternative is not required. Clearly state the proposed action and its alternatives, if any, describing any connected actions. The length of this section will vary based upon the complexity of the project. Describe: Who will do what, when and where will it occur, and how will the actions be

Comment [CW-8]: The Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study section is NOT REQUIRED. Consider whether it is beneficial to the public to include alternatives eliminated section in the EA. Otherwise, include it in the project record. Provide rationale for the responsible official not considering the alternative further. For example, describe how the alternative does not meet purpose/need, is duplicative, is within the range already being considered, is illegal, or does not

Comment [CW-9]: The Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives section is REQUIRED. The purpose of an EA is not only to disclose impacts, but to evaluate those impacts in the context of NEPA significance. In order to tie directly to the FONSI, the EA shall describe the impacts of the proposed action and any alternatives in terms of context (society as a whole, national, the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality) and intensity (seve

Comment [CW-10]: The Issues section is NOT REQUIRED; however, it is recommended to narrow the scope of the analysis. The objective of issues is to focus analysis on impacts that are more relevant to the decision being made, only briefly discussing other impacts. State any issues in terms of their cause and effect relationship. Make sure any issues that are identified for detailed analysis relate to possible significance effects or the decision to be made.

Name of Project

Name of Forest Service Unit

Table 1. Sample table format (Caption Table style)

Table Heading Style	Table Heading	Table Heading	Table Heading
Table Cell Style	Table Cell	Table Cell	Table Cell
Table Cell	Table Cell	Table Cell	Table Cell
Table Cell	Table Cell	Table Cell	Table Cell
Table Cell	Table Cell	Table Cell	Table Cell

Comment [CW-11]: The table is NOT REQUIRED. It is included as an example of formatting and content styles. For disabled accessibility (508 compliance), do not split or merge cells or have blank cells. Select the heading row and choose "Repeat Header Rows" from the Table Tools Layout tab. Choose Insert caption from the References tab to get auto-numbered captions. Provide any table notes directly below the last row outside the table. Under table properties, briefly provide alternative text for 508 compliance.

Impacts

Proposed Action

This section discloses the environmental impacts of the proposed action.

Issue [X]

Direct and Indirect Effects

The direct and indirect impacts of the proposed action...

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts of the proposed action...

Intensity Factor [X, describe]

Direct and Indirect Effects

The direct and indirect impacts of the proposed action...

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts of the proposed action...

Comment [CW-12]: Disclose both the short and long-term beneficial and negative impacts for alternatives and issues requiring detailed analysis. Include analysis of impacts which supports the degree to which the proposed action and alternatives, if any, address relevant issues needed to support or deny a finding of no significant impact. Analyze impacts related to intensity factors, including the context, sufficient to determine if impacts are significant or not.

The effects of not taking action need to be disclosed in order to provide a baseline from which the action and alternatives can be analyzed. The no action effects may also help to support the need for action. These effects may be incorporated into the analysis of the proposed action and other action alternatives or analyzed as a stand-alone no action alternative. 36 CFR 220.7(b)(2)(ii).

Comment [CW-13]: The subheadings below are a suggested format for analysis. It is organized by alternative, and then by issue and intensity factor. Under Issue, analyze project impacts related to each identified issue. Under Intensity Factor [X], analyze impacts related to each intensity factor that was not already addressed by the issues or is needed in order to determine the significance of the impacts.

Alternative [X]

This section discloses the environmental impacts of alternative [X].

Issue [X]

Direct and Indirect Effects

The direct and indirect impacts of alternative [X]...

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts of alternative [X]...

Name of Project

Name of Forest Service Unit

Intensity Factor [X, describe]

Direct and Indirect Effects

The direct and indirect impacts of alternative [X]...

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impacts of alternative [X]...

Agencies or Persons Consulted

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, State, tribal, and local agencies during the development of this EA:

References

Last Name, First Name. Year. Document Title. City, State: Name of Publisher. Page range or number of pages.

Examples:

Arno, S.F., D.J. Parsons, and R.E. Keane. 2000. Mixed severity fire regimes in the northern Rocky Mountains: Consequences of fire exclusion and options for the future. In: Wilderness ecosystems, threats, and management. Proceedings RMRS-P-15-vol. 5. Fort Collins, CO: USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. pp. 225-232.

Finney, M.A. 2001. Design of regular landscape fuel treatment patterns for modifying fire growth and behavior. Forest Science 47(2): 219-228.

Comment [CW-14]: The following should be considered in evaluating intensity:

- 1.Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.
 - 2.The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.
 - 3.Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as the proximity to historical or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.
 - 4.The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.
 - 5.The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.
 - 6.The degree to which the action may establish precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.
 - 7.Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. Significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming an action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.
 - 8.The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
 - 9.The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.
 - 10.Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.
- 40 CFR 1508.27(b)

Comment [CW-15]: The Agencies or Persons Consulted section is REQUIRED.

Agencies or persons consulted should be a list of Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes, and non-Forest Service individuals with whom the agency engaged in discussions as part of the EA. For example, the list could include structured consultation with such agencies as a State Historic Preservation Office or the US Fish and Wildlife Service and less formal consultation with a permittee or a county manager. In addition, the EA may note the total number of individuals and groups that were notified on the availability of the EA in a library, World-Wide Web, or other locations.

Comment [CW-16]: The References section is NOT REQUIRED. Below is a suggested format. Include cited literature or analysis incorporated by reference in the project record.

EA Template Instructions

Focused EA Tips

One of the best tips for focusing EAs is to use this template and follow our NEPA regulations. Avoid including sections or information that are not required by NEPA or another regulation without good reason. If you are adding more than what is required, ask yourself “why?” and discuss the approach with your line officer.

NEPA Regulations Excerpts

Environmental assessment: (b) Shall include brief discussions of the need for the proposal, of alternatives as required by section 102(2)(E), of the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted. 40 CFR 1508.9 (b)

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternative(s). The EA: (i) Shall briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis, including the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternative(s), to determine whether to prepare either an EIS or a finding of no significant impact (FONSI). (40 CFR 1508.9); (ii) Shall disclose the environmental effects of any adaptive management strategy. (36 CFR 220.7(b))

The EA: Shall describe the impacts of the proposed action and any alternatives in terms of context and intensity as described in the definition of “significantly” at 40 CFR 1508.27. (36 CFR 220.7(b)(3)(iii))

The EA may document consideration of a no-action alternative through the effects analysis by contrasting the impacts of the proposed action and any alternative(s) with the current condition and expected future condition if the proposed action were not implemented. (36 CFR 220.7(b)(2)(ii))

Other Focused EA Tips

To shorten the length of the EA, cite and include a brief summary of the material being incorporated by reference.

The EA is not required to:

- Include alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study.
- Include a response to comments, although consideration of comments is required to be in the project record.
- Identify resources that are not affected, although it may be helpful to state them, particularly if the public commented on a resource.
- Use analysis measures (or measurement indicators), although they may be helpful for the team to focus their analysis to relevant impacts.
- Include methodology and assumptions. If methodology and assumptions seem relevant, consider having a white paper in the project record and referencing it in the EA. Consider developing one that can be applied to more than one project.
- Include an Affected Environment section of an EA. Consider its usefulness in providing context for analysis and supporting a lack of significance.

For additional information on focused EAs:

- [Focused EA Frequently Asked Questions.](#)

- Tips for Resource Specialists: Focusing the Analysis for EAs.

Formatting Tips

- If you are not well versed in using Word and styles, refer to guidance in “The Basics of Using Styles and Templates in Word 2013” on the Enterprise Program’s Writer-editor Resources SharePoint site. (More great resources on using Word and other templates can be found on the site at: <https://usdagcc.sharepoint.com/sites/fs-teams-editing/SitePages/Home.aspx>)
- Avoid pressing Enter to add spacing between paragraphs and headings. Adjust line spacing settings on the Layout tab rather than pressing Enter.
- When copying and pasting from other documents, place your cursor at the desired location and paste as “Keep text only.” Then apply the appropriate Body Text or Heading Style.
- Use maps, tables, figures, charts, and/or photos when it is helpful to better convey a message. To add a graphic: Place cursor at desired location. Go to Insert > Pictures, (Navigate to graphic). Then right click, choose Format > Wrap Text > In Line with Text. For 508 Compliance: Right-click Photo > Format Picture > Alt Text > Type Title and description of graphic.

Additional Information

For additional information related to formatting and style, refer to the following information:

- Refer to the Pacific Northwest Research Station’s Author Guide, page 53 for assistance with formatting your references.
- Refer to the Government Publishing Office Style Manual for assistance with Government-required writing style.
- Refer to the Enterprise Program’s Editing Style Guide for Forest Service examples of Government Publishing Office style rules.
- Refer to the 508 Quick Reference Guide for assistance with making your electronic documents accessible.
- Refer to the Federal Plain Language Guidelines for assistance with improving the clarity and readability of your environmental assessment.